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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001294

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SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT ARRESTS JOURNALISTS; BAN ON INDIAN  
NEWS LIFTED; MURDER OF CAMPUS CHIEF

SUMMARY

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11. (U) The government arrested 98 human rights activists and lawyers, including 71 journalists, from Kathmandu and Kavre Districts on June 13. The government released all 50 arrested in Kavre the same day. Journalists from FM radio stations vowed to continue their protest programs despite the government's call for talks. Indian news channels resumed operation in Nepal following the government's approval on June 11. Maoists killed the Chief of Jana Priya University Campus of Pokhara and two of his security guards on June 12. END SUMMARY.

JOURNALISTS ARRESTED IN KATHMANDU

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12. (SBU) On June 13, the government arrested 48 journalists for protesting in restricted areas of downtown Kathmandu. The protest rally, organized by the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ), demanded press freedom and revocation of all restrictions on free media. The police also arrested 50 human rights activists and lawyers, including 23 journalists, in Kavre District (central Nepal). A senior FNJ official told EmbOff that those arrested in Kathmandu were still in police detention, but all those arrested in Kavre were released after six hours of detention. Journalists across the country organized similar protest rallies on June 13.

RADIO JOURNALISTS TO CONTINUE PROTEST PROGRAMS

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13. (SBU) Save Independent Radio Movement (SIRM), an association of FM radio journalists and publishers, had decided to suspend its June 14 protest programs because the government had verbally agreed to enter into dialogue with them. However, Tara Nath Dahal, Advisor of SIRM and former President of FNJ, told EmbOff that since the government had misinformed the media by saying that on June 13 SIRM had on its own volition withdrawn its protests, SIRM decided to continue with the programs and refuse to enter into talks with the government.

INDIAN NEWS CHANNELS REAPPEAR IN NEPAL

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14. (SBU) Indian news channels came on the air again in Nepal on June 11 following the government's decision to allow the resumption of broadcasts. After King Gyanendra's Royal takeover of February 1, His Majesty's Government of Nepal had ordered Nepal's cable TV operators to take Indian news channels off the air. However, despite the lifting of the curbs, Nepal One, the news and entertainment channel from New Delhi, remained blocked because the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) alleged that a Nepal One channel reporter collaborated with the Maoists -- it had aired live coverage of an ambush by Maoists during which the rebels took RNA personnel hostage in Dhading District (central Nepal) in November 2004. The channel has denied the allegation.

MAOISTS SHOT DEAD CAMPUS CHIEF AND HIS GUARDS

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15. (SBU) On June 12, Maoist insurgents shot Ganesh Man Palikhe, Chief of Jana Priya University Campus of Pokhara, and his two security guards. Palikhe and his guards were killed near the gate of his residence. Ashok Palikhe, Ganesh's brother and the Director of Fish Tail Hospital in Pokhara, told EmbOff that his brother assisted in the arrest of a Maoist student who

was trying to start a fire on the campus in March. After the arrest, the Maoists threatened to kill the campus chief if he would not help release their cadre from the custody of the Royal Nepal Army. The RNA had provided the guards who were killed.

MILLARD